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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 001729

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/22/2015

TAGS: PREL PGOV KWBG IS SETTLEMENTS ISRAELI PALESTINIAN AFFAIRS GOI INTERNAL

SUBJECT: APPROVAL PROCESS FOR 3,650 UNITS IN MA'ALE ADUMIM

NOT COMPLETE BUT MOVING ALONG

REF: A. TEL AVIV 00706

¶B. TEL AVIV 00707

¶C. TEL AVIV 01524

Classified By: Ambassador Daniel C. Kurtzer for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (U) Israeli press reported yesterday that the GOI has launched two plans, which together are termed either E1 or A1, to build 3,650 housing units between Ma'ale Adumim and Jerusalem. These housing units would connect the settlement with the city, creating geographical continuity between the two population centers. The press reported that one of the plans includes 1,250 houses and entails relocating the Judea and Samaria District Police headquarters from Abu Dis to the new neighborhood. The second plan is for an additional 2,250 houses and 150 units in a housing facility for the elderly.

¶2. (U) According to press, PM Ariel Sharon allegedly is personally supervising this concept of a "Greater Jerusalem," and he has reportedly stressed the importance of the plan in closed fora. Yedioth Aharanoth wrote that approval of the plan was expedited and completed in the last few days. He also noted that construction of the police headquarters was halted in November 2004 when "it emerged that the building was illegal."

¶3. (C) Col. Oded Herman of the Ministry of Defense told Embassy economic officer that contrary to press reports, there are many steps remaining in the approval process and construction is not going to "begin tomorrow morning." He explained that the plan to build E1 was originally approved in 1999, but that this was not a detailed plan, just an expression of interest that "we're going to build here."

¶4. (C) Herman noted that between 1999 and now, however, the planning process has moved along, and the GOI is in what appears to be the Permission for Deposition phase per ref A: the Town Building Plan has been approved, and it has been submitted to the subcommittees of the Higher Planning Council. He reiterated that approvals from the subcommittees would not happen "tomorrow, or even the day after tomorrow," and said that there will be special meetings for everything -- sewage, environment, roads, etc. The roads subcommittee alone could take until the end of the month, for example. Herman said that if the subcommittees approve the plan, then it will eventually go to publication for objections in Arabic and Hebrew newspapers, and the process will continue to move along for the next few months. He confirmed that there are approximately 3,500 housing units planned, as reported in press.

¶4. (C) Boaz Karni, Col. (ret.) Shaul Arieli, and former Civil Administration head BG (ret.) Dov "Fuffi" Sedaka of the Economic Cooperation Foundation agreed that the approval process is in Phase III of V. Karni and Arieli explained that although the GOI is just planning and has not yet issued tenders for construction, this is a "very dangerous stage" in the process and "now is the time to freeze" plans for expanding Ma'ale Adumim (Comment: per ref B, the GOI often retroactively approves construction plans without going through the entire approval process. End comment). They also noted that the proposed location of the new police headquarters is private Palestinian land, which is why construction was halted in November 2004. Karni and Arieli reminded econoff that Talia Sasson's recent report said that building on Palestinian land is illegal because settlements should only be established on State land (ref C).

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KURTZER